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ABSTRACT

This document is an overview of the projects conducted in England and Wales as part of the European Year of Lifelong Learning. The document begins with an overview of lifelong learning that outlines the United Kingdom's educational attainment targets for the year 2000 and the six strands of the United Kingdom's lifelong learning policy framework for the coming years: employers' investment in employee training and development; individual commitment; information, guidance, and advice; improving access to learning; basic skills; and partnerships. Presented next are the eight themes that guided the work of the European Commission and its member states as they worked to promote the advantage of lifelong learning to individuals, effective links between businesses and education providers, and the European dimension of lifelong learning. Next, U.K. priorities in the following areas are identified: adults in work; higher education; information, advice and guidance; adult education; and young people preparing for work. The remaining three sections contain the following: summaries of 16 European Year projects in the United Kingdom; guidelines for maintaining the momentum of the European Year of Lifelong Learning; and a discussion of the information and support available to those interested in promoting or pursuing lifelong learning. (MN)

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Lifelong Learning in England and Wales

An Overview and Guide to issues arising from The European Year of Lifelong Learning

Alan Tuckett

NIACE
THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION

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An Overview and Guide to issues arising from The European Year of Lifelong Learning

Alan Tuckett

NIACE
THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR ADULT LEARNING

with support from

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Department for Education and Employment

European Year of Lifelong Learning

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NIACE, the national organisation for adult learning, has a broad remit to advance the interests of adult learners. It works with national and local government, education providers, TECs, employers, the voluntary sector and others to promote equal opportunities of access to learning for all adults.

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Introduction

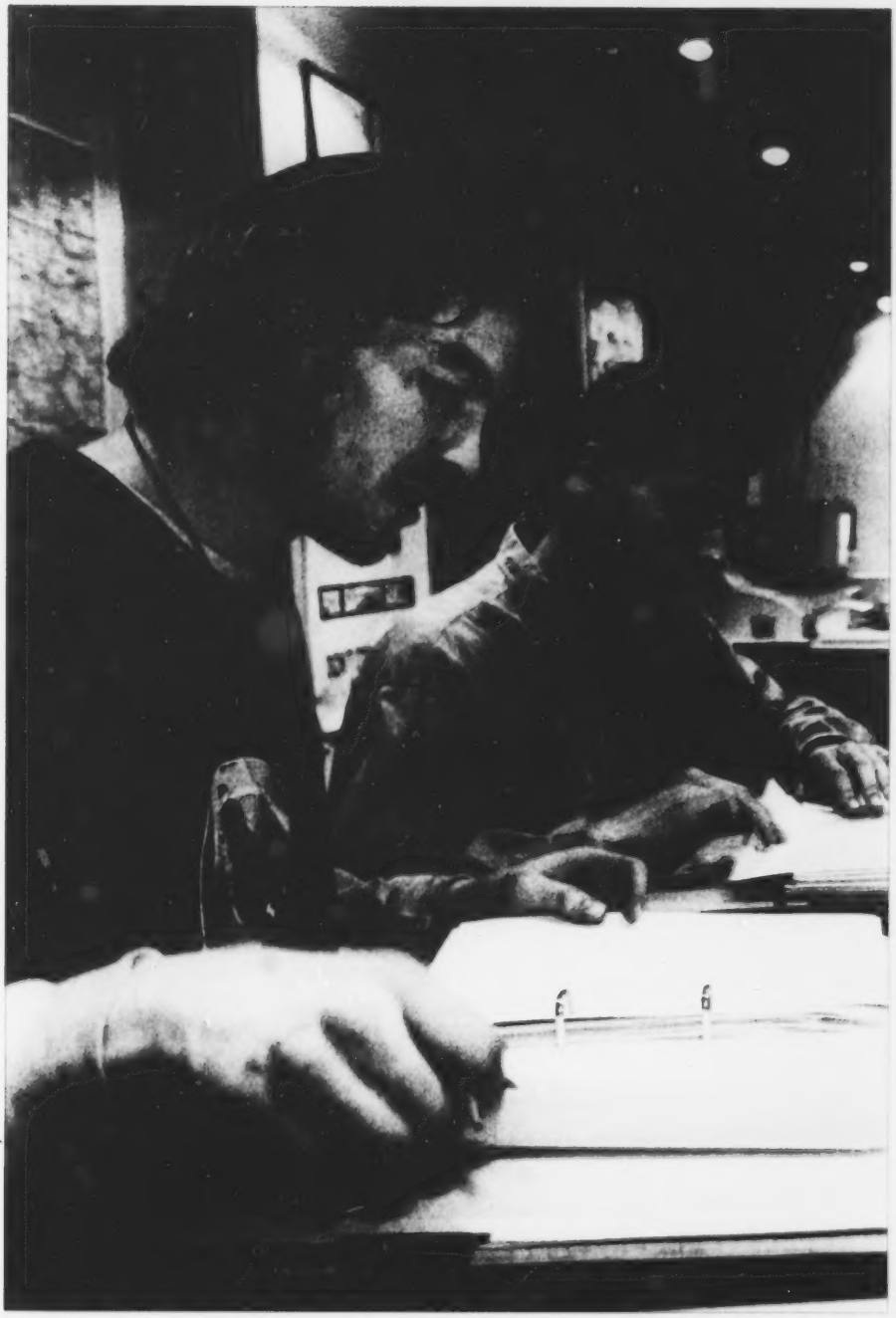
The European Year of Lifelong Learning has succeeded in England and Wales in raising interest in, and commitment to, the creation of a learning society.

This paper results from the role NIACE played as UK Information Office for the European Year of Lifelong Learning, working closely with the UK Office headed by Mike Evans and his colleagues in the Department for Education and Employment, and with Jimmy Jamar and his colleagues in DGXXII of the European Commission. It is the product of an EYLL project funded by the Commission and the DfEE, but the views represented in it are not those of the EU or the UK government. In an interesting way, they are also different from the views NIACE promotes to government in its advocacy role as the national non-governmental organisation representing the interests of adult learners and those who provide for them.

It is rather a reflection of the issues raised in working together. In it I have tried to reflect EU, UK and practitioner perspectives in an overview which introduces the policy debate affecting lifelong learning in England and Wales. In that sense, all its weaknesses are mine.

However, I do hope in the illustrations it gives of the projects funded under EYLL it shares some of the creativity, the energy and passion the best practice has engendered in 1996. To transform our society to a learning society there are many tasks large and small facing us. But the European Year makes clear that the key ingredients are imagination, co-operation and will. Given those there is no reason for the tasks to be beyond us.

Alan Tuckett
Director, NIACE



Lifelong learning – an overview

There is now a widespread consensus that it is going to be central to the economic well-being of the UK for us to create a learning society. The arguments are familiar. In an increasingly global economy there is a marked economic advantage for societies with skilled, adaptable and learning workforces.

In today's world you can design a product in Milan, borrow the money to produce it in Frankfurt, run it up in Taiwan, market it from Madison Avenue, and buy it everywhere. Money and machinery can move anywhere, but on the whole people are less mobile – so the skills of the workforce are a major factor in economic success.

Technological change is, at the same time, shortening the life cycle of products. Fifty years ago you could be confident that if you learned a skill as a young person you might look forward to secure and rewarding work for a working lifetime. Today new industries arise, mature and die much faster than that. As a result most people now expect to have to adapt their skills to work in new contexts, or to learn new skills for work in new jobs several times in a career.

Technical change is also reducing the need for some types of jobs altogether. For example, 50,000 jobs in banking were lost in a single year in Europe. Some technological change produces jobless growth – creating profit, but no new jobs to go with it. Of the jobs that are created, the majority require a high level of skill, whilst most of the jobs that are disappearing are manual or low-skill jobs.

New information and communication technologies are having an impact on the pattern of economic activity, and on the learning agenda – making work and learning at a distance possible. The pace of growth of the Internet and computer-based networking has been dramatic, and changes in telephony and in broadcasting make a wide range of communications strategies available.

Again, most European societies are seeing an increase in the number of older people as more of us live longer – at the same time as the birth rate is dropping. Unless we see a change in the structure of our working lives, we must expect a smaller proportion of the population to generate the surplus necessary to maintain standards of living for an ageing society – reinforcing the premium on the skill, flexibility and competitiveness of the workforce.

Many people recognise the importance of these challenges. The Confederation of British Industry responded in 1989 by developing National Targets for Education and Training, which were backed by the Trades Union Congress, endorsed in 1991 by the Government, and revised in 1995.

These targets set challenging goals for the UK:

Overall aim

To improve the UK's international competitiveness by raising standards and attainment levels in education and training to world class levels through ensuring that:

1. **All employers invest in employee development to achieve business success**
2. **All individuals have access to education and training opportunities, leading to recognised qualifications, which meet their needs and aspirations**
3. **All education and training develops self-reliance, flexibility and breadth, in particular through fostering competence in core skills**

Targets for 2000 – Lifetime Learning

1. **60% of the workforce to be qualified to NVQ level 3, Advanced GNVQ or 2 GCE A level standard**
2. **30% of the workforce to have a vocational, professional, management or academic qualification at NVQ level 4 or above**
3. **70% of all organisations employing 200 or more employees, and 35% of those employing 50 or more, to be recognised as Investors in People.**

The 1996 report of the National Advisory Council for the Education and Training Targets shows the size of the task (see Table 1).

Description	Target for 2000	Autum 1995 position	Increase since Autumn 1994* (% points)	Average annual rate of increase since Spring 1991 (% points)	Annual rate of increase required to reach target (% points)
Lifetime Target 1 Proportion of the workforce with NVQ level 3, Advanced GNVQ or 2 GCE A levels	60%	40.9%	0.5	2.3	3.8
Lifetime Target 2 Proportion of the workforce with NVQ level 4 or above	30%	23.9%	0.8	1.5	1.2
Lifetime Target 3 Organisations with 200 or more staff recognised as Investors	70%	11.4%**	5.4	2.3	12.3
Organisations with 50 or more staff recognised as Investors	35%	4.6%**	Data not available	0.9	6.4

* Based on revised figures that DfEE produced from the Labour Force Survey
** Figures shown for Investors in People are for England and Wales only
Source: Labour Force Survey, Investors in People UK, Welsh Office

Table 1

The UK matches the best international performance in producing graduates and other highly qualified staff. In higher education the Open University is recognised as a global leader in part-time distance education, and the broadband academic network SUPERJANET gives UK higher education institutions a lead, certainly in Europe. Overall, however, it performs poorly in international comparisons in both training and educational attainment – notably in basic and core skills.

It is what the CBI calls the 'long tail of under-performance' that presents the biggest challenge to the achievement of a learning society in the UK. However, there are some grounds for optimism – the UK compares favourably in its approach to lifelong learning.

Research commissioned by the Campaign for Learning, and undertaken by MORI, showed that most young people, and the vast bulk of the adult population, believe that learning is important. However, the same research showed that the majority of the population have no immediate plans

Likelihood of participation

Although 46% of adults say they would like to take part in some learning activity in the next year, far fewer (33%) actually think they will do so. The majority (63%) of people admit they will not be involved with learning in the next year.

Question: How likely are you to take part in any adult education, evening classes, college courses, open learning/self study or training courses in the next year?	
Very likely	18%
Fairly likely	15%
Not very likely	23%
Not at all likely	40%
Base: All	

Table 2

to undertake learning for themselves (see Table 2).

NIACE, the national organisation for adult learning, in another survey in 1996 showed that only about a third of adults say they have actually done any learning, whether formal or informal, in the last three years and that another third of the population has done no learning since leaving school (see Table 3 and Figure 1.

People who do join in are mainly middle class, younger, and have enjoyed an extended initial education. In training, too, the more you have done before the more likely you are to be offered employer support for further training.

By contrast there are few adult learners among temporary and part time workers, unemployed people, older people, and people without qualifications, working class people, and those who left school early. Many in ethnic and linguistic minority communities also find access difficult.

Participation in learning by social class

	Total	AB	C1	C2	DE
Base all respondents (000's)	4673	963	1262	1089	1358
Current learning	23%	32%	32%	17%	12%
Recent learning (in the last 3 years)	17%	21%	20%	16%	14%
All current/ recent learning	40%	53%	52%	33%	26%
Past learning (more than 3 years ago)	23%	28%	21%	25%	20%
None since leaving full time education	36%	19%	27%	42%	53%

Table 3 *Source: The Learning Divide*, Sargant et al. NIACE, forthcoming (1997)

Current and recent participation by terminal age of education

Figure 1

Europe

The picture differs in detail among the countries of the European Union, but the broad pattern is common. The Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development sums it up when it says that Europe is 'twice as old, half as skilled, and pays itself twice as much as the countries of the Pacific Basin.'

In 1993, the European Commission, under its President Jacques Delors, published *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment*, to look at this cluster of issues. It argued that lifelong learning was a key to Europe's future prosperity, and to success in the struggle to combat social exclusion – the tendency for a majority to benefit from increasing prosperity but for up to a third of Europe's people to be excluded from a wide range of the benefits of that prosperity.

The Delors White Paper sketched two alternative futures – one where a small number of people enjoyed secure and stimulating work, and many faced casual short-term low-paid work alternating with unemployment. The other described a world in which we invest in the skills of all the people, in the confident belief that wherever there is surplus skill and talent new economies arise to make use of it.

It also recognised that the learning skills needed for the new economy were exactly those skills you need for community development, and for the pursuit of individual fulfilment. It argued that throughout Europe we needed to give a concerted push to the construction of a learning society.

Since the Delors report the EU has adopted two new programmes which related to its themes. The SOCRATES programme focuses on measures to support Member States' education initiatives, and the LEONARDO programme deals with vocational training measures. These programmes derive from articles 126 and 127 of the Maastricht Treaty, which deal with education and training in the EU.

The decision of the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament to adopt a measure to establish 1996 as European Year of Lifelong Learning was widely welcomed by people working with adult learners throughout Europe. The Year was seen as an opportunity to bridge the education and training divide and to promote learning for active citizenship throughout peoples' lives.

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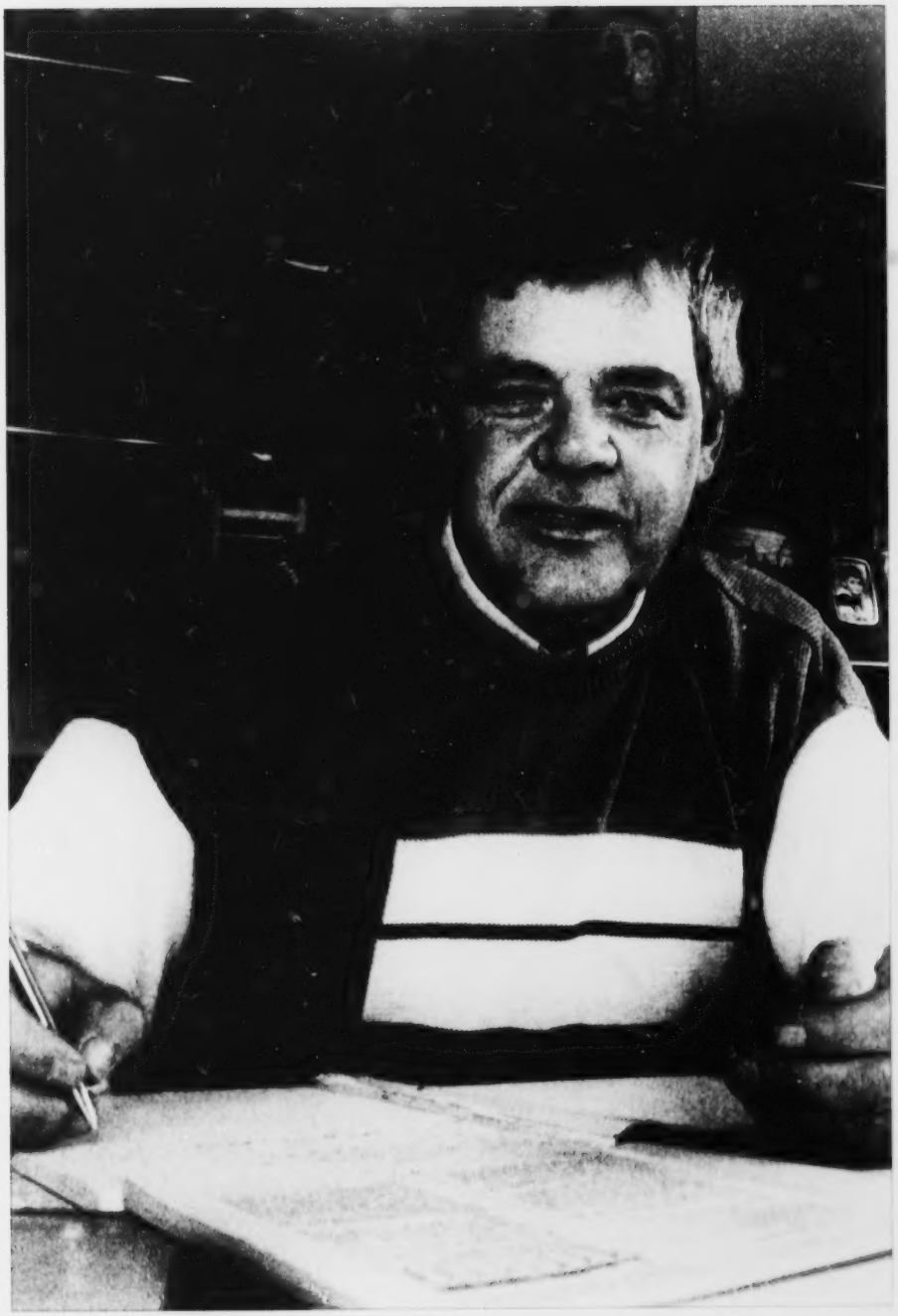

The UK

The European Year of Lifelong Learning has also been welcomed in the UK, across the spectrum of public debate and policy making, as a means of publicising and promoting the advantages of lifelong learning. Since the adoption of the National Targets a number of policy measures have been taken to stimulate increased participation, in the workplace and outside it, and the year provided an opportunity for taking stock of their effectiveness.

Perhaps the biggest fillip to adult participation in vocational and academic education followed the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, when the Government agreed to fund an increase of 25% in the numbers taking programmes funded through the Further Education Funding Councils in England and Wales. The new opportunities have, overwhelmingly, benefited adults, who now comprise three in four of the FE student body. There has been a similar increase in adult numbers in universities. In both sectors most of the adults are studying part-time, without access to mandatory financial support.

However, in many areas, reductions in support for local authority-based adult education have meant that not everyone has benefited from the changes. For older people in particular, but for others wanting to learn to make sense of the world and to enrich their lives, where you live continues to affect how much, if anything, is on offer. The reasons for this are contested. Central government sees it as resulting from local authority spending priorities; local authorities feel it results from government pressure on local authority finance. NIACE believes it results from the failure to define the duty to secure 'adequate facilities' for further education.

Changes in the qualifications structure were introduced with the setting up of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. National Vocational Qualifications identify the competences needed to make a success of work in different sectors. They are designed with the aim of making clear transparent progression routes for learners, and to help employers to recognise the skills and knowledge people changing areas of work bring with them, though they have taken some time to be widely accepted.

With the introduction of General National Vocational Qualifications the structure also seeks to do something about the gap in esteem between academic and work-related qualifications that has harmed education and training in England and Wales. The development of SCOTVEC in Scotland has had considerable success with the same aims.

There have been parallel moves in further

and higher education to create a coherent credit framework – with success at the regional level – so that parts of qualifications gained in different places can be woven together by learners, and recognised by institutions.

These measures have been supported by the evolution of practical arrangements to assess and accredit the learning which people bring with them from past experience, and by the development of Open College Networks. These offer credit for learning undertaken in informal and community-based settings, and link much local authority adult education provision to the new frameworks.

The creation of Training and Enterprise Councils has helped to bring local markets for training more closely into line with the demands of local labour markets. TECs vary as much as local authorities. Their agenda has until now been strongly determined by their role as local delivery agents for Government training programmes. However, this is changing. TECs like the Heart of England TEC which have developed local strategic planning mechanisms to include education and training partners across the spectrum (including local authorities) point to the key lesson of recent attempts to expand the community of learners – **that only through effective partnership and collaboration can agencies reach more and different adult learners.**

The Government's decision in 1995 to amalgamate the Employment Department and the Department for Education provides a clear message on the importance of collaboration in lifelong learning. The new DfEE has made a visible impact on opportunities for adult learners – through its broad consultation on lifetime learning, and the adoption of a policy framework in the field. This policy framework identifies six key strands for the period ahead. They are:

(1) **employers' investment in the training and development of employees**. The Government believes that this is critical to business growth, community prosperity and national competitiveness.

(2) **individual commitment**. Gaining commitment from individuals to return to and continue learning is a critical issue. This involves strategies to motivate people to take up and continue learning throughout their lives. It involves the development of new forms of provision to improve access to learning to widen participation, more flexible patterns of study, and initiatives to make learning more affordable.

(3) **information, guidance and advice**. The Government recognises that individuals need to have good quality, impartial information advice and guidance on opportunities available to them wherever they live, and has announced the setting up of a free

national telephone helpline from September 1997, building on the success of helplines run over the years during Adult Learners' Week, and other broadcasting-led campaigns.

(4) **improving access to learning**. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in England's committee, chaired by Professor John Tomlinson, has recommended improvements in provision for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Their committee to secure wider participation, chaired by Helena Kennedy QC, will report in the spring. The HEFC in England has published a review about access and participation in higher education; the FEFC in Wales has introduced additional funding for recruiting and teaching students from remote rural communities and from postal districts where large numbers of people in relative poverty live – yet there is clearly more to do.

(5) **basic skills**. The Basic Skills Agency estimates that 13% of the population have some difficulties with reading, writing or with numeracy. The demand for higher levels of literacy and numeracy is growing. A wide range of programmes funded by national and local government is directed at basic skills, including Family Literacy and the Literacy and Numeracy Centres. The Government is currently reviewing national programmes and consulting on strategies to improve basic skills.

(6) **partnerships**. The Government recognises that no single agency can by itself transform the UK into a learning society. Effective partnerships are needed nationally and locally including industrial, educational and community-based partners working for common purposes.

The achievement of a learning society requires strategic intervention and small-scale changes in attitude and practice. One illustration of the incremental changes taking place affects unemployed people claiming benefit who want to study for work associated qualifications.

Through the 1980s and earlier 1990s, people who were receiving unemployment benefits were allowed to study part-time so long as they continued to satisfy the conditions of entitlement, including being available for and actively seeking employment. People receiving unemployment benefits were not able to study full-time. With the introduction of the Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) during 1996, people receiving JSA can still study part-time, for up to 16 hours of supervised study – again as long as they are available for and actively seeking work.

Before the introduction of JSA there was no definition in benefit law of full- or part-time. The Government view was that each case was looked at on its merits on the basis of the evidence available, including

any statement made by the college delivering the course. Nevertheless, there was a widespead convention that courses involving no more than 21 hours' class contact and private study would not be seen as breaching the need to be available for and actively seeking work. Hence the view that ISA cut permitted part-time study from 21 to 16 hours a week.

Government sees ISA as a clarification of the rules on what counts as a part-time course. For ISA purposes, courses funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) of no more than 16 guided learning hours a week, are defined as part-time. This reflects changes in the way the FEFC structures its courses, which is now in terms of guided learning hours. For non-FEFC funded courses, the existing rules continue to apply.

Workskill Pilots, which have been warmly and widely welcomed, are planned from April 1997 which will allow people who have been receiving ISA for six months or more to undertake employment-related education and training leading to approved qualification. In Leeds and Liverpool the Workskill pilots will allow people to undertake part-time education and training and restrict their availability for work and jobsearch to work which would be fitted around their courses. In Cardiff, Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan, and in Wolverhampton and Walsall people will be able to undertake full-time education and training and be excused from the normal requirement to be available for and actively seeking work.

In the field of information technology Government initiatives include a Department of Trade and Industry-led 'IT for All' campaign and policy development in linking schools and colleges to the superhighway, reinforced by the findings of the FEFC's Higginson Committee. The BBC is launching a three-year Information Technology Literacy programme during Adult Learners' Week in May 1997. A key measure of how far these initiatives contribute to lifelong learning will be their success in extending the reach of the learning community.

Further Government action to give body to its policy framework featured in the 1996 Budget when James Paice MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the DfEE, announced that from September 1997 a year-round Learning Line would be established, linking with local careers and educational guidance networks. In the Budget itself, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced proposals to make Vocational Training Relief available from January to people receiving Career Development Loans, as well as for legislation to confirm that people taking part in Employee Development Schemes are not taxed on the benefit of the scheme.

The growth of such schemes, which were pioneered in the UK by Ford and its unions, is impressive, with nearing 700 separate schemes in existence now. In Employee Development Schemes workers can have up to £200 a year to study anything for personal development, alongside any training the company provides. Companies with such arrangements recognise that they work – with real improvements in motivation, enthusiasm and capacity for learning, and increased flexibility, and take-up reaching across all levels of seniority in firms. They demonstrate that Government action is only part of the picture.

In community settings, too, there are plenty of examples of people taking initiatives that make a real difference – the Women's Centre established by a group of miners' wives in Castleford, the self-managed basic skills programme at Pecket Well near Halifax, and the Age Exchange workshops in Greenwich all share an understanding that it is possible to create resources to share and develop skills and aptitude, and to foster active critical citizenship through participation in learning. The electronic village halls network in Manchester, which links Manchester Metropolitan University and the Workers' Educational Association with a range of community organisations to offer access to the new information technologies, is a practical illustration of the kind of partnership everyone now believes to be necessary.

While there is much to be encouraged by, however, there is no suggestion that we are yet doing enough – hence the welcome offered to the European Year of Lifelong Learning.

European goals

The European Year of Lifelong Learning was the first such Year whose framework was established as a result of the co-decision procedure involving the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. It was agreed that the Year should promote:

- the advantage of lifelong learning to individuals
- effective links between businesses and education providers
- the European dimension of lifelong learning.

Eight themes

To this end the Commission and Member States identified eight themes for the work of the Year:

(1) the importance of a high quality general education, open to all without discrimination, as a preparation for lifelong learning

(2) promoting vocational training leading to qualifications as a basis for:

- a smooth transition to working life
- further personal development
- adapting to a changing job market
- equality of opportunities between men and women;

(3) promoting continuing education and training, especially in relation to new requirements in the world of work;

(4) motivating individuals, especially from under-represented groups, toward lifelong learning;

(5) promoting links between education and training providers and business, particularly involving small- and medium-sized companies;

(6) promoting to both sides of industry the importance of lifelong learning in the contexts of European competitiveness and economic growth;

(7) promoting to parents the importance to their children of education and lifelong learning;

(8) development of the European dimension of initial and continuing education and training.

The Commission undertook to pursue these themes through a range of centrally promoted activities, European conferences and round tables; through commissioning research on attitudes to learning in the EU; through commissioning a public relations company to publicise the aims of the year widely; and through a programme of small grants to be administered through national offices.

SOMALIA

UK priorities

As funding for national and regional events was limited – in the UK's case to some £400,000 – the UK Government decided to give particular priority to five areas within the broad range of themes adopted by the European Union. These were:

- adults in work
- higher education
- information, advice and guidance
- adult education
- young people between the ages of 14 and 19 preparing for work.

Each priority area offered a range of areas and activities on which applicants for funding could draw:

Adults in work

- Individual responsibility for lifelong learning
- Role of employers and trade unions
- Lifelong learning in small- and medium-sized firms, (SMEs), and links between SMEs and further education colleges.

Higher education

- promoting part-time study
- links with businesses
- non-traditional routes into higher education
- transfer of technology, particularly to small-and medium-sized enterprises.

Information, advice and guidance

Adult information and guidance initiatives on continuing education, training and careers education and guidance, especially involving partnership with Training and Enterprise Councils or Local Enterprise Companies, libraries, voluntary organisations and education and training providers, including local education authorities.

Adult Education

- Opportunities for older workers
- Encouraging participation of adults under-represented in education and training:

Young People Preparing for Work

The priority was for work with 14- to 19-year-olds, and in particular:

- Initial vocational training, including Modern Apprenticeships
- Business-linked projects, especially for small and medium-sized firms.

Proposals for work in other EU priority areas were eligible, too, subject to the limits of available budgets.

European Year projects in the UK

The complete list of projects funded in the UK is available from the European Year of Lifelong Learning Office (see the back page of this Guide for the address). Taken together they illustrate the enormous range of current activity in the field of lifelong learning. They show the complexity of learning routes adopted by adults, and the scale of the challenge facing us, if we are to support new learners in getting something of a feel for the opportunities available, and to make intelligent choices about their own learning. They include initiatives taken by large national bodies, and by providers working in specific local communities; initiatives to target excluded groups, to look at how languages could most effectively be promoted, and initiatives to celebrate existing learners.

Inn Tuition

Airedale and Wharfedale College recognised the common problem faced by providers seeking to make contact with groups of people who remain sceptical about what learning can do for their lives. Their EYLL project was mounted jointly with Tetley's Breweries. The College sent a questionnaire to six inner-city pubs in Leeds, which showed that 40% had been to no courses in the last five years, 21% had been to none since school, and 56% thought the idea of running courses in pubs excellent. *Local history* and *Ordering Drinks Abroad* were mounted at the Cardigan Arms; *Calligraphy for Christmas Cards* at the Adelphi; and *Fitness for Stress Management* at the Victoria. The courses were a success, and other organisations joined in later.

Cut, Advice and Blow Dry

Rycotewood College continued the theme that to involve everyone in the learning society it will be necessary to take learning to the most unlikely places, by targeting women who might consider returning to learning at their hairdressers. The college used stylists to encourage customers to get advice and guidance about learning opportunities in the local area.

Learning through the workplace

Northumberland Training and Enterprise Council concentrated its initiative on involving local employers in contributing to the National Targets for Education and Training, and in promoting Employee Development Schemes, where employers foster a learning culture among the workforce by funding learning undertaken by workers in their own time, which usually does not have an immediate connection with the immediate skills need of the business. Employee Development Schemes, pioneered in the UK by Ford and its unions, have proved effective in securing a positive attitude to learning throughout the workforce, reduced absenteeism, improved industrial relations, and lower turnover of staff. Learning leaks – what you learn willingly in one place, you apply in other contexts. Northumberland TEC distributed leaflets and mounted seminars to foster the learning workplace in the county's enterprises.

The Box and The Gown

Liverpool John Moores University was supported in a project which presented case studies of adult learners on Granada Television, produced a multi-media pack and ran a guidance helpline. Since television reaches the full range of the population free at the point of use in their own homes it offers a powerful alliance to education and training providers seeking to extend provision to non-participating groups. A similar project was run in Gateshead.

Shifting the Boundaries

Shift workers have a difficult time in pursuing education and training opportunities – particularly when their pattern of work shifts on a regular basis. Not only is it an effort to change the body clock, but also few education and training agencies offer the full range of staff development opportunities in the middle of the night. Kent Adult Education Service was funded to undertake an action research project on shiftworkers' access to adult and further education, mount pilot courses and share the conclusions with European partners in France and Romania.

Adult Learners' Week

Perhaps the highlight of the Year in the UK was Adult Learners' Week, which is co-ordinated annually by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE). The Week focused in 1996 on the European Year. More than 10,000 people phoned the free telephone helpline run during the Week, 13-19 May, and some 40% of them found their way into courses as a result. 5,000 local events, national conferences, a Ministerial reception and a Parliamentary reception, almost 800 press articles, and coverage on all the major television channels combined to celebrate existing learners in all their diversity and to encourage others to join in. The Week attracts a broad range of sponsorship, and substantial support from the European Social Fund.

Bargaining for Skills

The Trades Union Congress used the Year to launch a major focus on Bargaining for Skills, and was supported by the Year in producing a report and case studies on social partnership in Lifelong Learning. At the TUC conference organised to launch the publication of the report Wendy Fenn, a UNISON shop steward, described vividly how her confidence to learn had been destroyed at school, and how engaging in adult learning had rebuilt it, and led her to take representative responsibility.

Creating a Credit Network

One of the major difficulties affecting the UK education and training system has been the profusion of qualifications, and the absence of a coherent credit framework that would help adults match their past experience, achievement and qualifications with the requirements of their current aspirations. Two major initiatives have sought to address this problem in the last decade. On the one hand the National Council for Vocational Qualifications has overseen the introduction of an industry-led qualifications system offering competency-based qualifications. Open College Networks have started at the other end, developing a credit structure, based on community based peer review – enabling people to gain recognition for courses in different sectors within a common frame. OCNs have spread rapidly, and the launch of the Northern Ireland Open College Network was supported during the Year.

Mentoring

Following local government reorganisation Torfaen County Borough Council took over a project developed by the former Gwent County Council to develop mentoring for disaffected young people to offer careers advice and action planning assistance.

Education and Homelessness

During 1995-6 the University of the West of England, in collaboration with Avon Community Education and *The Big Issue* magazine, developed a pilot project devising a new approach to the training and personal development needs of homeless people. EYLL supported project members to travel to regional offices of *The Big Issue* and community education establishments to disseminate the report and accompanying resources, to promote provision for homeless people.

Electronic Village Halls

People in rural communities without access to transport are easily excluded from education and training provision. Electronic village halls are a direct attempt to address that problem – by taking technology to isolated communities to offer the chance to take open and distance learning courses, and to link to the information superhighway. The University of Wolverhampton launched two sites in rural Shropshire with support from EYLL.

Work with Older Adults

The Glasgow division of Strathclyde Regional Council was funded to make sure that older people could be reached with information about learning opportunities on offer, and about the benefits in learning as you get older. Since the *British Medical Journal* reported early in the year that there is now evidence that keeping active mentally can prevent the incidence of Alzheimer's Disease medical opinion now backs common sense that using skills prevents the loss of them.

Information Technology, Disability and Lifelong Learning

A large number of meetings and conferences were held during the year to share good practice across sectors. The National Council for Educational Technology staged an event in February, followed up with the publication of information sheets to demonstrate how IT can be used to improve access to learning opportunities for people with disabilities.

Parents' Perspectives

Gateway Publishing is a community publisher with a proud record of work with groups under-represented in mainstream publishing. Its contribution to the European Year was to produce and distribute a book of writing by black parents attending a family literacy project in Moss Side, Manchester. The family literacy initiative, led by the Basic Skills Agency has done a great deal to reduce the generational boundaries in learning, and the pilot projects have recorded exceptional successes for adult learners and their children alike.

A Partnership for Lifelong Learning In The Workplace

Employers played a key role in the year's success. The Engineering Employers Federation, which represents almost 5,000 engineering and manufacturing companies in the UK, employing 650,000 people held a conference with social partners to raise awareness of the importance of creating, and participation in, lifelong learning in the workplace. Gillian Shephard MP, Secretary of State for Education and Employment gave the keynote address.

Diary of 1,000 Adult Learners

NIACE, the national organisation for adult learning, organised a call for learners all over the country to record their experiences of the challenges and triumphs of adult learning, and published a collection of the diaries submitted, edited by Pam Coare and Al Thompson of Sussex University. *Through the Joy of Learning: Diary of 1,000 Adult Learners* captures the energy, creativity and passion released by a successful and demanding learning challenge, something common to all the EYLL initiatives.

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Maintaining momentum

There is no doubt that the European Year has been successful in highlighting the case for lifelong learning in the UK. However, given the scale of the challenges outlined in the opening sections of this paper, the momentum must be maintained if we are to have any hope of achieving a learning society in which everyone can join.

To that end it will be vital to secure the optimum use of local resources for learning, and to provide a helpful, supportive national framework which encourages coherence of provision, and clear routes for people to take their learning further where they want to.

At the heart of a learning society are learners and potential learners and the communities in which they live. Such communities currently vary widely in the range, coherence and quality of learning opportunities on offer. However, all are served by a number of key partners:

- Local education authorities
- Colleges of further education
- Schools
- Higher education institutions
- Training and Enterprise councils
- Other local authority departments
- Health authorities
- Community-based organisations and voluntary bodies
- Training organisations
- Firms
- Trade unions
- Libraries and museums.

Less close to hand, another cluster of agencies affect local opportunities for learning, notably:

- Open and distance education providers
- The DfEE
- Regional offices of Government
- The European Union
- Examination bodies
- Professional associations
- Broadcasters
- The World Wide Web
- Publishers...

The list is not a tidy one, but nor is effective provision for adults tidy. The key task for 1997 and beyond is to enable different agencies to collaborate effectively to promote learning. A number of strategies have been developed which in different ways offer experience to look at and to improve upon.

Local Strategic Forums

Each TEC has a responsibility to take a strategic view of training needs against the framework of economic development in the area it serves. In the Heart of England TEC area, for example, this responsibility is met through a strategic forum which brings together all the significant public and private sector bodies responsible for education and training to pool evidence of

need, local strategies to overcome barriers to access, and to co-ordinate provision, acting as a significant dynamic for change. This has been recognised by Government in new strategic guidance which will require TECs to maximise opportunities at local level to promote the development of a world class workforce. They will consider how best to work with others to encourage all employers to invest in employee development and foster a culture of lifetime learning by motivating individuals to go on learning. They will also need to work with education, training and guidance providers to ensure that people of all ages have access to high quality, impartial information, advice and guidance, that provision is relevant to the needs of the local economy, that everyone has the opportunity to acquire the basic skills on which to build further learning, and people become more aware of the relevance of vocational education and job-specific training to their employment prospects.

Learning Cities

The commitment to become a Learning City or Learning Town is one response to the increasing complexity of local learning provision, and to the need to secure a platform increase in participation to help economic regeneration. Each is different – with Liverpool focusing on supporting partnerships to spread access to new technologies, Hull concentrating initial energies on revitalising a depressed council estate, and Milton Keynes bringing together four universities, the TEC and a range of public and private sector bodies to reinforce the strategic forum. Yet all share collaborative cross-sectoral partnerships, many between the public and private sector, a determination to increase the volume of participation. Attempts are being made to identify base line data and set targets for improvement. All these initiatives have recognised that no single agency is able to provide effective solutions on its own.

Competitive Challenge Bids

The institution of competitive Single Regeneration Bids, and of City and Rural Challenge competitions which require evidence of local collaboration as a key criterion, have added to the momentum for local inter-agency collaboration. Often it is the Economic Development Units of local authorities that lead initiatives to look at, for example, the basic skills needs of local communities alongside planning for renewal of physical plant.

Local Government Reorganisation

Responsibility for securing adequacy of provision for further education for adults in England and Wales rested primarily with LEAS until the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, since when it has been divided between LEAS and the Further Education Funding Councils. However, the broader field of lifelong

learning stretches beyond the remit of an LEA, touching on the work and responsibilities of health and social service agencies, libraries and museums, economic regeneration, as well as the full range of employing and employee agencies.

Local government reorganisation has provided many authorities with the opportunity, and often the need, to relocate responsibility for lifelong learning as a cross-departmental function, sometimes located in the Chief Executive's office. However local authorities are funded to meet all their statutory obligations including those relating to adequate provision of uncertificated courses for adults, and need to bear this in mind if faced with fiscal or organisational pressures which focus primarily on schools.

Open College Networks

For a local learning society to work effectively arrangements need to be in place to recognise the learning done in one context when you want to move on to another. Where the learning done is vocational and competence-based the framework of National Vocational Qualifications can work well. However, there are dozens of different contexts in which people learn things, beyond the narrowly vocational, yet they may want to point to this learning when seeking to take the next step on a learning journey. The development of Open College Networks over the last decade, based on peer review provide practical cross-sectoral collaboration to award credit for learning undertaken and, almost incidentally, an important staff development opportunity.

Guidance Networks

The availability and quality of information and advice about education and training opportunities is critical in encouraging greater participation. At present the availability and the quality of such services across the country is variable. The Government will in 1997 invite bids to develop local information and advice services further. The development period is planned to be phased in over three years and priority will be given to those bidders who show that they can deliver quality assured services quickly.

Research shows consistently that for people in work, supervisors or managers are the main source of advice about training and education opportunities, and also that few supervisors or line managers feel informed or confident about playing the role. A significant challenge facing guidance networks will be reaching that group of workers and supporting them in effective roles as guides to learning.

Broadcasting

Whilst local partnerships can do a great deal to improve the coherence of local offers, no one reaches potential learners as

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effectively as the mass television channels. TV reaches people free at the point of use in their own homes, and the evidence is that it can stimulate people to participate. In 1997 the BBC plans significant numeracy and information technology campaigns combining educational and motivational programming. Local providers need to co-ordinate support for this type of campaign since it can have an immediate impact on local demand. However, broadcasting can also reveal new audiences – notably in the last year for learning in the middle of the night as the BBC's *Learning Zone* and *Summer Nights* showed.

National Targets for Education and Training

The National Targets, developed by the Confederation of British Industry, backed by the Trades Union Congress and endorsed by Government, have acted as a clear focus for the reshaping of thinking about Britain's skills needs for young people and adults alike. Each of the targets identifies a useful focus for local planning, as does the overall Aim, but the Investors in People programme, in particular, has a direct impact on participation because of its requirement that all workers in a firm, part-time and full-time, should be included in appraisal and have a training plan.

The National Lottery Charities Board and the Voluntary Sector

Voluntary organisations and learning for its own sake will get a welcome fillip in 1997 when the National Lottery Charities Board's fourth programme, *New Opportunities, New Choices*, is awarded. The bulk of £160,000,000 will be injected into a sector that not only complements statutory and private sector providers in meeting today's priorities, but also prefigures tomorrow's public policy priorities, and invents new forms to meet new problems.

Leonardo and Socrates

The most visible evidence of continuing European Union commitment to this area of work rests with the LEONARDO and SOCRATES programmes, which derive authority from clauses 126 and 127 of the Maastricht Treaty. However, work with adults is funded under more than 160 EU budget lines. It will be a challenge for the Commission to highlight the richness of the work it supports across the full range of its programmes, and to continue the sequence of inter-governmental conferences that began with the Athens Presidency in 1994.

The Funding Councils

Improved opportunities and widened participation are priorities of a number of committees established by the Further Education Funding Council in England, and in the review of higher education currently being chaired by Sir Ron Dearing. The FEFC's Kennedy Committee is explicitly considering Widening Participation;

the Tomlinson Committee reported in September on strategies to improve learning opportunities for people with learning difficulties and disabilities, and promoted the argument that institutions needed strategies for inclusive learning; the Higginson Committee on the application of new technologies also has a significant implication for the range and style of opportunities on offer. If the Dearing committee addresses the current imbalance in public support for full-time and part-time study, it, too, will affect learning opportunities in a dramatic way. Meanwhile, practical measures like the Welsh FEFC's decision to award additional funding to institutions which make provisions for students from remote communities or from socio-economically disadvantaged postcodes do make a real difference.

Telematics

The UK enjoys an international advantage in the broadband network, SUPERJANET, used by higher education institutions. The developments arising from the FEFC's Higginson report, supported by the Further Education Development Agency, should strengthen colleges' capacity to act as centres for open learning. Schools will benefit from the DfEE's Superhighways initiative, and the technology-cautious should be encouraged by the Department of Trade and Industry's IT for All programme and the three-year IT campaign to be launched in 1997. And yet...access to computing remains concentrated in cities, and for men. There is a need for more local learning centres along the lines of community laundrettes. More needs to be done to develop user-friendly materials for learners, and to integrate new technologies into existing programmes. This is a key area for imaginative and inclusive work.

Campaigning for Learning

All these contexts can be exploited for the benefit of learners. However, one important message from the European Year, from Adult Learners' Week, and from the Campaign for Learning is that providers do more, and potential learners are more likely to join in, when imaginative and creative measures are taken to promote a culture of learning. That involves alliances of the sort outlined above – backed where appropriate by Government action, underpinned by the new Learning Line, and by involvement of the media. Nothing sells the learning society as well as the experience of passionate and engaged learners, and there is no better strategy for reaching new people than to let today's learners tell their stories.

This is a message that can be passed from this European Year to the Year Against Racism and Xenophobia in 1997. It can be held on to until 1999's International Year of Older People, and it should surely inform our planning for the new millenium.

Further advice

Supporting Learning

Motivation is often the single most important factor for learning. Employers, line managers, supervisors, trade union officials, education providers, librarians, partners, children, parents and others can do a great dealt to encourage and support life-long learning.

First and foremost, enthusiasm is a great boost to learning. Second, active help in overcoming obstacles makes all the difference between a desire to learn and actually doing it.

Also, enabling people to be actively involved in their children's education through parental leave and time off to visit school during the day or to participate on governing bodies will reap great benefits. Good employers have schemes to build links with local schools and support civic responsibilities by staff.

Coaching, mentoring, appraisal, staff development and employee development schemes at work can make a big difference for people in work. Investors in People can offer a useful benchmark for some organisations.

Above all, try to encourage people to gain access to the wide range of support available.

Employee Development Schemes

These are thriving all over the country. Businesses and organisations of all shapes and sizes are finding that an Employee Development Scheme helps their people back into learning and that everyone benefits. It has been found that schemes could attract back to learning people with such disadvantages as: low confidence, few skills and qualifications, scarcity of time and/or money. Employee Development Schemes are often organised by the employees for employees, with employer funding.

Investing in People and Learning at Work

The Investors in People Standard is a national quality standard for effective investment in the training and development of people to achieve business goals.

It is seen by many experienced and successful business people as the starting point for making their business improve in quality and performance. The Standard provides the framework, through a planned approach to setting and communicating business objectives and developing people to meet these objectives. It fosters a culture of continuous improvement in the organisation, which enables it to manage competitively in the face of change.

The standard is seen as a kitemark for quality and a commitment to education and training. It is based on four key principles:

- Being committed to develop all employees to achieve business goals
- Regularly reviewing training and development needs
- Taking relevant action
- Evaluating the outcomes

To find out more about Investors in People, telephone your local TEC, or contact Investors in People UK, on 0171 467 1900.

Sources of support

Guidance counsellors know their way through the maze of opportunities. They can talk things through, help people to draw up an action plan and point them in the right direction.

Find them under Careers Service, Adult Guidance or Education Shop in the phone book. Ask at Information Technology Centres (ITECS), your public library, job centre or Training and Enterprise Council (TEC or Local Enterprise Council in Scotland. In Northern Ireland the Training and Employment Agency has a similar role). Scan your local paper for information about education roadshows, open evenings at colleges and community centres.

TECS and LECS are independent bodies funded from taxes and led by local business people in partnership with public and voluntary agencies. They aim to support economic growth by sponsoring training. They are responsible for government training schemes such as:

- Training for Work
- Youth Training
- Modern Apprenticeships
- Business Start Up.

Most TECS run a service especially geared to adults who want advice about careers, education, training or employment. Sometimes there are 'high street' shops set up to give information and advice on training and learning opportunities. In some regions there are information buses which tour rural areas or housing estates. Many TECS operate a helpline service for adults.

Contact your local TEC to find out what is available. They also fund courses in colleges and can give help towards childcare and transport costs.

Careers services often have an advisory service for adults as well as providing free advice to young people. People may be able to consult their library of careers

information or computer database. Ring to find out what is available.

Tap into useful information on computer

The following computer programmes can help people make choices about courses and careers.

TAPS – Training Access Points – provide information, via an easy to use computer, on local training and education opportunities. They'll tell you what's available at colleges locally or through private training providers. You'll also be able to find out details such as times, methods of study and contact names.

ECCTIS 2000 helps you to find out about courses. It gives quick access to information on nearly 100,000 courses at over 700 universities and colleges in the UK. The computer asks you some simple questions to identify the type of course you want and then gives details of appropriate courses, how long they last, the method of study and contact names.

For further information contact:
ECCTIS 2000, **Oriel House, Oriel Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL50 1XP. Tel: 01242 252627**

MICRODOORS is another computer package which helps you to look at different jobs and decide whether they are right for you.

COIC CareerBuilder links to MICRODOORS, allowing you to build up a picture of your own interests, preferences and aptitudes.

Find them in colleges, careers offices, adult guidance services and libraries. TECs, LECs and some community centres may also have them.

TECs

For details of your local TEC check the phone book or contact The TEC National Council, 10th Floor, Westminster Tower, 3 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7SX.

NVQs/SVQs

NVQs/SVQs are an ideal way for learning, particularly for people who want to learn something with direct bearing on the work they are doing or would like to do. It is not so much a matter of a person going on a course to prepare for an examination, it is more a matter of collecting evidence which proves a person has the competence to do something.

Some of this evidence will be from things that person is doing every day anyway, or has done in the past, either in the work-

place or somewhere else – at home or in a club. The essential point is that it is proof of competence.

This is why literally tens of thousands of people who never thought they would ever get a qualification after they left school suddenly find that they have national qualifications, that what they know and do is recognised as showing their competence to do things.

To find out more about NVQs/SVQs, telephone 0171 387 0978.

For details of the full range of projects funded by the European Commission through the European Year of Lifelong Learning see the final report of the European Year of Lifelong Learning in the UK, available from the European Year of Lifelong Learning Office, DfEE, Moorfoot, Sheffield, S1 4PQ.

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NIACE
THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR ADULT LEARNING

NIACE, the national organisation for adult learning, has a broad remit to advance the interests of adult learners. It works with national and local government, education providers, TECs, employers, the voluntary sector and others to promote equal opportunities of access to learning for all adults.

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